THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b): The Government has decided to allow imports of white sugar at zero per cent duty. However, the countervailing duty will be applicable on such imports and a Notification dated 23.06.2006 permitting import of white sugar without any quantitative restrictions upto 30.9.2006 has been issued in this regard. The landed cost of imported sugar is higher than the domestic prices. The provision made for imports is only an enabling provision to facilitate imports of sugar if the domestic prices increase relative to international price.

(c) Dussehra and Diwali festivals fall in the month of October, 2006 whereas the imports of white sugar has been allowed only up to end of September, 2006.

Import of wheat

461. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:
SHRI UDAY PRATAP SINGH:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to import additional quantity of wheat besides 3.5 MTs already planned;

(b) whether Government have further relaxed quality norms for imported wheat to enable more private agencies to bid for the global tender for 30 lakh tonnes, floated by STC;

(c) if so, whether import of wheat is to meet the buffer requirement as production and procurement have declined this year;

(d) how much wheat has been imported;

(e) whether it is sufficient to meet the requirement; and

(f) to what extent the prices of wheat have been checked?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) Additional import of wheat will be resorted to the extent required to maintain the prescribed buffer norms and to meet

the commitments and Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and other welfare schemes.

(b) Yes, Sir. The Cabinet has approved a proposal for relaxing the quality and phytosanitary specifications for imported wheat to enable wider participation by the suppliers.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Approximately 92,000 MTs of imported wheat has reached the Indian ports. The remaining quantity of wheat is scheduled to arrive at the Indian ports between July 2006 to January 2007.

(e) As per reply in para (a) above, the shortfall, if any, in the Central Pool, would be met by additional import.

(f) The rising trend in prices has been halted and the prices are expected to come down once the imported wheat reaches the market in bulk quantities.

Imports vis-a-vis prices of foodgrains

†462. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that consumer sale prices of foodgrains particularly of pulses and wheat in the country has not declined despite import by Government and announcing relaxation in duties;

(b) if so, the facts in this regard and whether it is a fact that there is no major difference in the prices of foodgrains in foreign countries as compared to India; and

(c) if not, the deals finalized for import of wheat, sugar and pulses by the end of June alongwith their quantity?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) While retail prices of pulses registered a decline in all centres in Northern and Southern zone and few centres in the

†Original notice of question was received in Hindi.